

HMS *Havant*

Summary of Service 1939 to 1940



Battle Honours: Atlantic 1940, Dunkirk 1940.

Ralph Cousins

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Summary of Service 1939 to 1940

HMS *Havant* was one of six destroyers that were ordered by the Brazilian navy on 8 December 1937 and was built by Messrs J. Samuel White & Co. Ltd. at Cowes on the Isle of Wight. It was intended to call her BNS (Brazilian Navy Ship) *Javary*.

She was laid down on 30 March 1938, launched on 17 July and completed on 19 December.

However following the declaration of war with Germany on 3 September 1939 these destroyers were requisitioned by the Admiralty on 7 September and became known as the 'Havant' class. The other 5 were named *Harvester*, *Havelock*, *Hesperus*, *Highlander* and *Hurricane*.

On 8 January 1940 HMS *Havant* went to Portland to carry out her working up routine. On 31 January she sailed for Plymouth where she joined the Western Approaches Command. She left Plymouth on 4 February in company with HMS *Ardent* and HMS *Whitshed* on an anti-submarine sweep to Cape Finisterre arriving back at Plymouth on 9 February. At Plymouth she was taken in for the fitting of de-gaussing (anti magnetic mine protection) gear but during this time she developed defects that put her out of action until the middle of March. It was suspected that these defects were the result of sabotage.

On her return to duty she was allocated to the 9th Destroyer Flotilla, Western Approaches Command, operating out of Plymouth. For the remainder of March she was on anti-submarine patrol on which she had one contact but the result was doubtful.

On 7 April HMS *Havant* sailed for Greenock where she was due to escort a convoy going to Gibraltar. However, during her passage to the Clyde, the Germans invaded Norway and Denmark so she was sent to Scapa Flow in the Orkneys where she arrived on 10 April. At this time the 9th Destroyer Flotilla was temporarily detached to the Home Fleet.

On 11 April HMS *Havant* sailed in the company of HMS *Hesperus* to Thorshaven in the Faroe Islands to determine the local political situation there following the German invasion of Denmark and reported that all was quiet.

They then remained in the area providing an anti-submarine screen for HMS *Suffolk* that was bringing a Royal Marines detachment to occupy the islands (Operation Valentine). This operation took place on 13 April and HMS *Havant* returned to Scapa Flow on 14 April.

HMS *Havant* sailed from Scapa Flow on 17 April and until 7 May was escorting convoys to and from the Narvik area of Norway. On arrival back in Scapa Flow she was detached to Greenock.

Her next assignment was to take part in 'Operation Alabaster', the occupation of Iceland. She sailed from Greenock on 14 May escorting SS *Franconia* and SS *Lancastria* to Reykjavik. After the landings she returned to Greenock arriving on 25 May.

At about this time the situation in France had deteriorated and 'Operation Dynamo', the evacuation of retreating troops from Dunkirk, was started. HMS *Havant* sailed from Greenock on 27 May and arrived in Dover on 29 May.

On arrival at Dover she was immediately despatched to Dunkirk where she embarked 500 French troops off the beach at Braye-Dunes. She also attempted to tow HMS *Bideford*, who had had her stern blown off, off the beach but the tow parted. She sailed back to Dover with the troops arriving at 0400 hours on 30 May.

On the morning of 31 May HMS *Havant* sailed from Sheerness and after picking up some troops off the beach at Braye-Dunes went in to Dunkirk Harbour to pick up more troops to make a total of 932 and return to Dover.

She immediately sailed back to Dunkirk and embarked a further 1,000 troops arriving back in Dover at 0230 hours on Saturday 1 June.

After a quick turn round HMS *Havant* was back alongside the jetty at Dunkirk at 0730 hours where she embarked a further 500 troops. When leaving the harbour at 0800 hours there was a heavy air attack and the destroyer HMS *Ivanhoe* was hit amidships. At 0840 hours she went alongside her and helped remove her troops. She then proceeded down the channel at the entrance to Dunkirk under heavy dive-bombing attacks all of the way.

At the end of the channel HMS *Havant* was hit by two bombs in the engine room and a third bomb dropped approximately 50 yards (46 metres) ahead of her that exploded as she passed over it.

All of her troops were transferred to the minesweeper HMS *Saltash* and after an attempt was made to tow her she was sunk by gunfire from HMS *Saltash* at 1015 hours in position 51.08N 02.16E. HMS *Havant*'s casualties

were 1 officer and 5 ratings killed and about 25 wounded. At least 25 troops were killed or wounded.

Crew	145
Displacement	1,400 tons
Length overall	323 feet (98 metres)
Beam	33 feet (10 metres)
Draught	12 feet 4 inches (3.8 metres)
Propulsion	Twin Screw 34,000 Shaft Horse Power C A Parsons geared turbines.
Speed	36 knots (67km/h, 41 mph)
Armament	3 x 4.7 inch guns. 2 x .5 inch machine guns. 2 quadruple revolving torpedo tubes 8 x 21 inch torpedoes 1 depth charge rail - 20 depth charges

At some stage the aft 4.7inch gun was removed in order to accommodate up to 110 depth charges

A Previous HMS *Havant* that served during World War I This was an Aberdare type minesweeper built in 1917. She was sold in August 1922 to Siam (Thailand) and renamed the *Chao Phraya* after the river that flows through Bangkok.

Lt Cdr Geoffrey B Mason – Service Histories of Royal Navy Warships in World War 2.



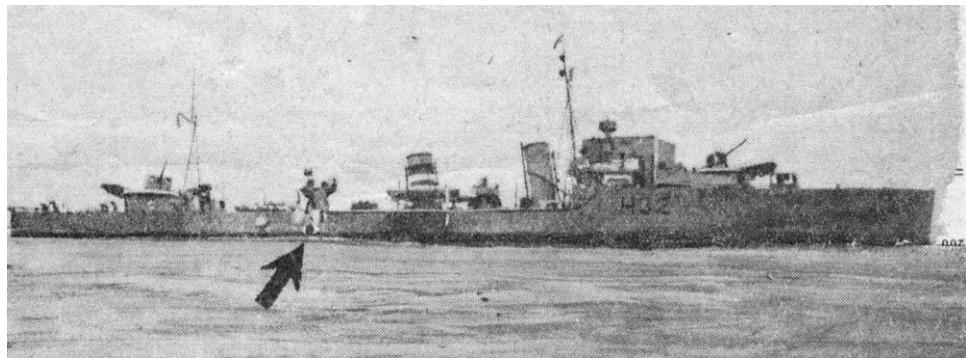
HMS *Havant* entering Dover with troops from Dunkirk, 31 May 1940.



For nine days, between 26 May and 4 June 1940, nearly 340,000 British and French troops were evacuated from Dunkirk.



The crew of HMS *Havant*. It looks as though some of them are boys who have joined their first ship. None of them have any long service stripes on their arms. They could have arrived on boards from either HMS St Vincent in Gosport or HMS Ganges at Shotley Gate near Ipswich. There are two petty officers and a senior rate in the rear along with the officers of course in the second row. There are also two midshipmen with peaked caps as well. *Bob Hind*



This picture by a north-east member of the crew of HMS *Havant*, which was lost during the evacuation operations off Dunkirk, shows a hole just above the water-line caused by enemy attack. *Newcastle Journal*, Wednesday, 5 June 1940.



The Mayor of Havant, Councillor Yvonne Weeks, laying a wreath at the Havant War Memorial on 1 June 2010.



The Royal British Legion banner for HMS *Havant*.
AVE! HAVANT – GOOD WISHES! HAVANT

· IN REMEMBRANCE ·

THE LOSS OF H. M. S. HAVANT
COMBINED FORCES
SUNK AT DUNKIRK
JUNE 1ST 1940.



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
· WE WILL REMEMBER THEM ·

Memorial stone at The Royal British Legion headquarters,
Brockhampton Lane, Havant.

Members of the crew who were killed in action:

WILLIAM HENRY DAWSON – Engine Room Artificer 3rd class.
ALFRED EDDY – Stoker Petty Officer.
HEBER PERCY MCBRIDE – Chief Engine Room Artificer.
REGINALD F. C. SMITH – Stoker 1st class RFR.
PATRICK STANTON – Leading Stoker.
ERNEST S. STRIBLEY – Lieutenant (E).



Memorial window in St Faith's Church, Havant

TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF ALL
WHO SERVED IN HER, DUNKIRK 1940.

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